

Ten years ago today, at this exact moment, 8:46 am in New York City, 2:46 pm in Bern, American Flight 11 crashed into Tower One of the World Trade Center. Let us please stand in silence to remember the many victims of that terrible day.

Good afternoon, and welcome to the United States Embassy in Bern. We come together today to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks that killed nearly 3,000 people in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania.

It was a glorious September morning—much like today. Megan was at home, cleaning up after breakfast, getting ready to head out for a walk on a perfect day. I was at a board meeting, poring over financial statements. Hundreds of millions of American were going about their daily routines, unaware that 19 terrorists were boarding four flights in the US, intent on causing mass destruction and killing thousands.

American Flight #11, from Boston, hit the first tower of the World Trade Center. My wife called me – a terrible accident! How many were lost? And then, a few minutes later, at 9:03, the second plane hit Tower Two. We were under a full-scale attack – we did not know why or who or what else was to come.

Around the country, around the globe, we were glued to our television sets. I stayed on the phone with Megan.

And then, at 9:40, our house shook and a gigantic roar spread across Northern Virginia. At my Land Rover dealership, the big showroom windows buckled and almost shattered. We scanned the skies for planes, but all we could see was an enormous column of smoke rising from along the Potomac River. Megan jumped into her car to get the girls from school, and was the last car allowed past the Pentagon before police closed the roads.

The TV was filled with rumors of a fourth plane, headed for Washington, DC – the White House, the Capitol, the CIA. We heard many planes were flying up the river, coming to kill us all. We watched with disbelief as the towers crumbled in slow motion, one after the other, taking to their deaths firefighters and police who had rushed to the rescue. And then we heard that a fourth plane had indeed been found, crashed in a cornfield in Pennsylvania.

In less than two hours, New York City had become an inferno of death and pain, terror and ashes. In less than two hours, thousands of innocents from more than 70 countries had been murdered. In less than two hours, the world came to a stop – in horror, shock, and grief. In less than two hours, the United States was changed forever.

But it was not changed in dark ways. Heroism, selflessness, generosity, and solidarity abounded. In New York and Washington, survivors did not panic, but helped one another to get out and away. On United Flight 93, passengers decided to sacrifice themselves and their plane to keep the terrorists from hitting another target.

490 public safety officers, police and firefighters, gave their lives trying to help people to safety. Across the country, people rushed to hospitals to give blood. Our little girls were among the tens of thousands who made cookies or signs for the local rescue workers. Around the world people of every faith prayed, held vigils, and offered their support. And in the US, money poured in, hundreds of millions, for the families of those who had died.

The attacks of 9-11 brought to the fore the courage, compassion, and resilience of the American people.

Today we remember, honor, and grieve for the victims and their families. We honor the heroic first responders. We pay tribute to our troops and law enforcement officers and their families, and to all who have done so much to keep us safe.

But we also recognize that September 11 was but one example of the power of terrorist acts to disrupt our lives. Love, courage, and resilience are called forth every time tragedy strikes. From Bali to London, from Mumbai to Madrid, from Moscow to Norway, the senseless barbarism of terrorists **is met and must be met** with the compassion of the great-souled.

President Barack Obama has said, “The strength of America has always been the character and compassion of our people. So as we mark this solemn anniversary, let’s summon that spirit once more. And let’s show that the sense of common purpose that we need in American doesn’t have to be a fleeting moment; it can be a lasting virtue – not just on one day, but every day.”

We are joined today by the Charge d’Affaires of the Embassy of Norway in Bern, Harald von Rees Rotler. Together we will plant two trees – one to honor the 9-11 victims, and the other for those lost in the tragic attack on Utoya Island and in Oslo this past July. We ask you to participate with us by throwing in a handful of dirt, these resilient trees which will survive many storms, cold, heat, and drought in the decades to come.